

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

CHAIRPERSON:

Senator Bob Duff,
Representative Ed Vargas

SENATORS:

Formica, Hartley, Moore,
Kushner

REPRESENTATIVES:

Phipps, Perillo, Godfrey,
Yaccarino

REP. VARGAS (6TH): I'll ask our Clerk to please
read the safety information.

CLERK: In the interest of safety I would ask you to
note the location of and access to the exits in this
hearing room. The two doors through which you
entered the room are the emergency exits and are
marked with exit signs. In the event of an
emergency please walk quickly to the nearest exit.
After exiting the room go to your right and exit the
building by the main entrance or follow the exit
signs to one of the other exits. Please quickly
exit the building and follow any instructions from
the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return
unless and until you are advised it is safe to do
so. In the event of a lockdown announcement, please
remain in the hearing room, stay away from the exit
doors and seek concealment behind desks and chairs
until an all-clear announcement is heard.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you Madam Clerk. I'm
hereby calling the Executive Legislative Nominations
Committee into order for the purpose of Public
Agenda -- Public Hearing Agenda. First before we
commence with our first nominee, I'd just like to
say that normally we allow every nominee a -- an
introductory remark after which we open up the floor

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

Committee, to the Governor or to the State of Connecticut?

ANDREW MAIS: No, sir.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well, thank you very much for your testimony and that brings us to the second point in our agenda today, which is House Resolution, Resolution confirming the appointment of Seila Mosquera-Bruno of Milford to be Commissioner of Housing. Seila, please come forward and before you take a seat please raise your right hand. Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated. Congratulations on your appointment, and you may proceed with your opening statement.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Good morning, Senator Duff and Representative Vargas, distinguished members. I'm very thankful for being here and thankful for Governor Lamont's nomination. My name is Seila Mosquera-Bruno, the Commissioner appointee for the Department of Housing. As I look back on my background and qualifications to direct the Department of Housing, I think about a quote from Mya Angelo. "My mission in life is not merely to survive but to thrive and to do some with passion, some compassion, some humor and some style." I came to this country when I was 23 with three years of college and a daughter. I worked in a factory for a couple of years. Then I decided to continue my education. I took English as a second language, pursued an Administrative Assistant Associate's Degree while working as an Educational Assistant at

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

the same college, a part-time job with no benefits. Once I obtained the Associate's Degree I got a job as an Administrative Assistant at Yale University. While working at Yale I continued my education attending school at night. I obtained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration and then a Master's Degree in Urban Studies. In 2006 I had the opportunity to complete the Achievement Excellence in Community Development, an 18-month fellowship program hired by University John F. Kennedy School of Government.

I was with NeighborWorks New Horizons for 22 years in different capacities. Organizer, real estate developer, Deputy Director and for the last 15 years I've -- I have served as the Chief Executive Officer. NeighborWorks New Horizon is a non-profit 501C3 organization dedicated to providing affordable housing opportunities to help build strong communities and revitalize neighborhoods. Under my leadership the organization expanded operations beyond New Haven County to New London and further counties. More than doubling the organizations performance and personnel. We did not expand for expansion sake but because there was a need that had to be satisfied.

I have also served on several local and national boards. I was a board member of the National NeighborWorks Association, a Co-Chair of the NeighborWorks National Real Estate Development Advisory Council. I was the President of the Board of the Connecticut Housing Coalition, board member and Treasurer at the Connecticut Legal Rights Project and I'm a member of the Richland Home Campaign and the Home Connecticut Steeling Committee.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

In April 2015 I joined the Federal Home Bank of Boston Advisory Council and in 2017 I -- I joined the (inaudible - 00:52:01) Bank National Advisory Board. I have also been recognized by several organizations for my work in the community. In 2004 I received a 40 Under 40 Award from the Healing Business Times. In 2007 I received a Housing Good Egg Award from the greater New Haven Community Loan Fund. And in 2009 I was recognized as a rising star by Business New Haven. In 2010 I was inducted into the Gateway Community College Foundations Hall of Fame for a section of contributions to community. In 2014 I was named one of the 50 most influential Latinos in Connecticut recognized by Latinos United for professional advancement, LUPA. I have been in advocate for affordable housing in this state and nationally. I'm a speaker at -- and a speaker at several local and national venues on housing related issues. My passion for housing and community development has also lead me overseas to organize and recruit volunteers to construct some capacity building and supervise technical assistant to non-profits in Guayaquil Ecuador, my native country. Additionally since May 2018 I was Assistant Neighborhood Services Puerto Rico with the recovery efforts after Hurricane Maria.

As I hope you can see, my dedication to build and provide affordable housing and rebuild communities is for me is more than just a job. I know for a fact that having a decent, safe, healthy, affordable place to live makes a vital difference in someone's life. I know firsthand when I was in school and beginning to work, my income was limited to minimum wage. By having a decent, safe, affordable place to live allowed me to continue my education. In

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

Connecticut today thousands of renters live on the precedence of homelessness and are spending much more than 30 percent of their income on housing. We know housing is too expensive. The sixth highest medium monthly housing cost in the nation. We know we don't have enough affordable homes. Because I know the difference that a home makes in someone's life my vision for the department is to build a team and system that can respond expeditiously to the affordable housing need while providing excellent customer service. I envision a department that fosters affordable housing, development and provide technical support Connecticut cities and towns in coordination with other agencies, all while partnering with a private and public sectors.

Housing that is affordable, housing that is near transit, housing that allows people access to jobs, training, childcare and fresh food. Housing that allows parents to choose their schools, neighborhoods and communities that work best for their child. That kind of housing can provide opportunity and can help solve many problems. It can reduce highway congestion, reduce air pollution, reduce (inaudible - 00:55:19). It can promote economic growth. Help balance the state budget and improves the fiscal health of all of our municipalities. Housing is the largest part of everybody's household budget. It is the cornerstone of every life. As Maya Angelou said, I don't just survive, I thrive in challenging times. I like to learn, practice and engage all those that want to be part of the solution. I bring passion, dedication and humor to all my endeavors and I promise to you today and to all the residents of Connecticut that I will work as hard as I can, as I have done my entire

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

career to achieve the goal we all share. That all Connecticut residents should have a safe, secure, affordable home that provides them with the opportunity for education, adequate income and fulfillment of their family dreams.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. Do you have any questions?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you very much for your initial statement and once again, congratulations on your appointment by Governor Lamont. At this moment we'll open up for Committee.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for your indulgence. Congratulations and thank you for your testimony. I think you've built quite a personal record and able to lead -- able to lead the agency. As you know, the Department of Housing existed, didn't exist for a very long time and then existed again. From your standpoint I guess, what do you -- what do you believe -- since we've had the department now for about six years, probably in the seventh year now since it's been re-instituted. How do you believe that the Department of Housing fits in with our economic development here in the State of Connecticut and what are some of the kinds of things you will do to help ensure that -- that helps promote economic activity here in Connecticut?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Well affordable housing is an industry. Construction. It brings resources. I can just give you a simple example. If we just -- and this is from my own experience, the Department of Housing is very important because it promotes activity. So if we have 100 units of affordable or just housing construction let's say, round the

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

numbers \$20 million in the project. So the National Builders Association has estimated that for every 20 units built, that is 1.2 jobs created. So that means that in 100 units, you have 120 jobs that can be created in a given year. So and that's on the construction side. Then on the permanent side you create about five to six jobs permanently to support that.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): All right, thank you. And I think you know, from my standpoint I always felt that housing and transportation and education were all combined or at least three legs of a stool in order to promote growing our tax base and promoting economic activity and frankly you know, working with CHFA, working DECD, making sure that our economic goals align, housing is an intracule part of that as young people graduate college or go from high school to career, affordable housing is very, very important for young people, for bringing them or keeping them here in the State of Connecticut. Housing is very important for working class families and one of the reasons why we have congestion on our highways is because of the fact that people can't live in the same towns where they work. And in addition to that, as senior citizens look to downsize, we can -- you know we have housing that's -- that's just not available for them. We have a wonderful housing, maybe we can get you down some point in Norwalk, but the Marvin which is under -- it's called -- the umbrella is called Under One Roof and it's senior housing and it's also a childcare center at the same -- same time, and it's one of the only ones in the State of Connecticut and it's really a wonderful model that's been happening since the 1990s but we could replicate that, it's about a

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

three year wait for people to get in to those apartments. But the issue has been cuts in the budget obviously, which is cuts in rent. We've been very fortunate over the last few years to have -- to have received about \$3 or \$4 million to rehab and update the building. But there's a lot of senior housing right now and other housing -- public housing that has language for far too long that needs to be rehabilitated. I believe the last stats are that spent over \$5 billion of economic activity and leveraging based on some of the work we've done over the last six years on affordable housing, but we know that there needs to be a lot more. So I think from my standpoint is ensuring that the Department Housing is working with the Department of Economic and Community Development, working with CHFA, making sure our economic goals are aligned so that we are continuing to have a base for -- for people to have confidence and have housing that is safe, that they have where they could live and work in the same place and that we're not driving people out because of high costs when they may be retiring, they may be having a fixed income.

So I know you're going to be tied into all those kinds of things. I have to run to another meeting but I just wanted to put those on the record because I think those are extremely important issues for a young agency at this point, and a new Commissioner but I'm confident that you -- you would -- I don't want to say you would agree with that because I don't want to speak for you but I would feel confident that you would probably align in some of those goals anyway as far as your -- your position.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): But again thank you and congratulations on the nomination. I'm sure you'll do a great job.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you. And yes, those are in my thoughts about the coordination of collaboration. It's very important that we all work together and preservation is as important as new construction.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Duff. Any other members of the Committee wish to ask a question or make a comment? Yes, ranking member, Representative Perillo. You have the floor.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morn -- good afternoon. Congratulations.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Good afternoon. Thank you.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): It was nice meeting you yesterday. Just a couple of questions and obviously affordable housing being such a central component of what your agency does. In this building we hear a lot of talk about whether or not our affordable housing statutes are actually helpful in generating affordable housing opportunities. 803G is talked about quite a bit. I'd like your opinion on the effectiveness of those statutes.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So I have to be honest, I have used 830G a couple of times but we call it friendly 830G. That means that the town knew what they needed and I'm talking specifically about the town of (inaudible - 01:02:50). And they invited us and we worked through that process. So that 830G is an appeal process, right? So my idea of what I would like to do is actually to be proactive and I would like to have a small working group in those

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

small towns so that we can look at how we can plan, how we can help and provide technical assistance to those towns so that we proactively look at their needs and then help them to build some pipeline.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): So that's in -- that's friendly. Let's talk about unfriendly. And I'll give you an example and it happened in my community and my community is no different from many others. I live in Shelton. I represent Shelton. So a developer comes into a residential neighborhood with a proposal to build 20 single family homes, which is four or five times the number that would be permitted within the normal zoning regulations. A zoning commission denies that application. The developer then comes back three months later with a proposal to build 100 units in five stories on that same parcel but with affordable housing component. The developer doesn't want to build 100 units. The developer wants their original 20 single family homes and the developer simply uses either the actual affordable application or the threat of that affordable application as a way to get what the developer wanted in the first place, which was 20 single family market rate homes. So I'm wondering whether we're actually seeing 830G generate affordable housing opportunities or its simply leverage for developers to build a higher number of market rate homes. What are your thoughts?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So there have been some studies that have generated about 5,000 units. I don't remember the year but I was reading that it had generated affordable units and it's like any statute or any law, there is always room for improvement and that is always because I'm going to use it and abuse it. So if a town -- my thought is

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

that if the town is proactive in creating a plan for affordable housing where this thing doesn't happen just because a developer comes in and wants to build X amount of units, and the statutes allow for 80 -- 20 percent of those units to be affordable. So if I go back to the town and the town to be proactive in creating a plan and looking at the needs so that it has some response and some action they can take.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): So, so the goal of 830G then is to encourage towns to generate a plan. What would that plan look like?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: That's not what the goal is. I mean it's being used as an appeal process, right? The 830G, so it's the law to make sure that towns allow for affordable housing. Now it shouldn't be applied to every town just because small towns don't have infrastructure and it becomes very expensive. So you have a small development the infrastructure is not there. You have to do -- if there's a sewer you have to do septic systems and that costs a lot of money. So if you should take into consideration those things, yeah 830G does not apply to everybody or to every town.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): What other tools -- you know I look at some of our cities and there are many buildings that perhaps 30-40 years ago were bustling industrial structures and now they're not. What tools could we use as a state to encourage redevelopment of those buildings with affordable housing as a component?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I think you can see the difference that those things are happening, historical rehabilitation of resources and is a lot of pre-development money encouragement and funding

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

that sometimes some of the cities need to get those things done, but I worked in a couple of cities in New Haven and Waterbury and we look at those issues. How do we rebuild the neighborhoods and help the cities to come up with some plans to do that? But it is a lot of activities going on with old buildings, historical buildings.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): And I ask because you know, often times -- I mean those buildings are there.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes, absolutely.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): You know sometimes though the older it is, the harder it is. So I'm just wondering what sort of financial incentives the state could offer being it in the form of tax credits to encourage private developers to get them over that hurdle, which is wow, it's going to be really difficult to do that. What -- what -- what could we do? What would you recommend?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: The -- some of the things that can be -- can be improved is the coordination with the Historical Commission because that takes some time. So I would like to do some collaboration with those departments and also with Brownfield, the DECD which is Brownfield Redevelopment.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Well and you're taking me exactly where I want to go which is, one of the things I hear from towns is that the State Historical Preservation Office is -- is not helpful when it comes to redevelopment of old structures. You know, SHPO is interested in preserving an historic look and feel of those buildings and that is not necessarily consistent with a practical financial goal of building units that can actually

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

generate some sort of profit. How -- how do you balance that? How do you make that work? And SHPO as you know has quite a bit of authority, quite a bit.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: A lot because I had -- I went through SHPO for one of the buildings in Shelton and it takes a long time to -- it takes a year. So I -- because I don't work in that area, I do want to coordinate with them because the time that it takes is really discouraging to developments because it becomes too expensive.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): So -- so as Commissioner, how do you -- how do you -- how do you sell that? How do you generate a change within an agency that some would argue, Historical Preservation Office, not DOH, that some would argue has an impediment to redevelopment?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I'm not going to make any assumptions but I want to try. Collaboration.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): I'll -- I'll take that. I'll take that because we've got to start somewhere.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Then just shifting slightly over to Brownfields. What can the Department of Housing do to work with DECD in the Office of Brownfield Redevelopment to encourage direction of funds towards projects that will lead to affordable housing opportunities? And is that being done now? I mean I'm not aware of it if it is.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: To tell you the truth, I know the ECD provides funds for Brownfield Redevelopment.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

I don't know the complexity in -- between the two agencies. I've only have been there for a week.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Got it.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: And two days, but I -- that's one of my tasks.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Thank you. I think it's very important to pay attention to that. My community, as you know --

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yes.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): It matters. My community is not alone. There are a lot of -- a lot of towns in Connecticut with very interesting buildings and properties that are just saddled with historical environmental problems. So I think -- and if -- if we can satisfy some of the Department of Housing's goals by pulling in Brownfield's money to make certain things happen I think that would be worthwhile so the path that you're thinking about is -- makes me feel good, so thank you. And best of luck.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Perillo. Representative Davis, you have the floor.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman and congratulations.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

Rep. DAVIS (57TH): On your nomination. I think your resume speaks for itself as your dedication to affordable housing and your experience in that area will serve you well as the Commissioner of Housing

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

here for the State of Connecticut. The only issue I wanted to bring to you -- to your attention, and I know a lot of the conversation around the Department of Housing is regards to affordable housing and those programs. But in the eastern part of Connecticut where I represent, the housing crisis that is most commonly on the mind of most of our residents is the crumbling foundation issue that's happening across the state -- or across that part of the state. And I know that the Department of Housing has a limited role, but a role in that in that you have the crumbling foundations homeowner advocate's position in your office, in your department as well as oversight over some of the testing programs that are available to residents in the state. And I'm wondering if -- what your vision is for improving upon the state's ability to help these homeowners.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So to tell you the truth when I came to the agency I did not know much about crumbling foundation. I have been briefed about some of the issues. It's a priority for our department. We're going to start having some meetings with some of the legislatures from the part of the state and actually next week we're trying to get some -- some meetings. I want to learn. I want to see how we can help and how we can bring everybody together.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): Thank you. And I would encourage as we move forward that we continue to look to the Federal government for assistance as well. I know last year we had Secretary Carson come out and tour some of the homes as well and I encourage to perhaps do that as well as to take a look at some of these homes in person and see the

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

devastating affect that they have, and work with them not only from HUD programs like CDBG but also working with them to try to perhaps get FEMA assistance for this slow-moving disaster that's taking place across the state. So I look forward to working with you and with your department in trying to achieve those goals and I just wanted to say congratulations on your appointment. Thank you.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Davis. Senator Hartley, you have the floor.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Yes, thank you now, Mr. Chair. And Seila, it's a delight to actually see your name for this position, this Commissionership. I'm also very pleased to have a woman and someone who has an incredible CV and deep experience. Well first of all, I just want to tip my head and recognize the incredible work that was done with your leadership in Waterbury Gaffney Place. That has been a completely regentrified area. We are so proud of it. We bring people to that area all the time to see what has happened. And like most projects like that, the multiplier affect has been, and I'm sure you have seen it, all of the parallel streets now have been touched and it -- it's a different -- it's a different place, a very different place.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): And it's a place where actually we are and can continue to attract new, even millennials into the heart of our city. And so right now when we have your leadership on a state level, that's one of the things I'm very interested

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

in in working you know, the commerce side, is how the department fashions a plan and begins to really almost have a new touch with regard to housing and that is you know, the urban initiatives of trying to create livable cities and housing is -- housing is key to that. So I guess two things. I'd like to know if you had an opportunity, and I know you know this is all happening very quickly, so you know I don't want to be unfair in asking and if not, we can continue to talk about this; you know, how you see the department working on changing the face of housing in the state and urban areas, particularly to attract millennials and also that coupled with this new designation that we have, the Federal designation of the opportunities in which Waterbury has two. Because I think these are great opportunities to leverage our state resources and the Department of Housing is going to be pivotal in that.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So the -- we -- I am very proud of the work that we did in Waterbury. It is a perfect example of collaboration because it was a private partnership with the Smith Foundation, with Western Bank and the city and the community. So it wasn't just about housing with the historical, so you just have a point of reference to the rest of the members. And we incorporated street landscape and historic colors so it's just a beautiful street coming out of the museum, so continues that artistic feeling as you will. The department -- I have been in the department for a week and two days and so my idea, you know my work is bringing those neighborhoods back is promoting and working with economic development, we'll try to stay oriented which is what millennials are looking for. I have a

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

19-year-old and she says I'm going to choose NYU and she says she wants to stay in New York because she can walk everywhere, and she can go to restaurant, she can buy drink, yeah it's here, right? She cannot go to bars but having all that in combination where we can have housing close to the transportation, housing close to amenities is what is going to bring our young people back. So I definitely looking forward to work with my staff and work with other agencies so that we can come together in a plan process.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): And so as you begin to you know craft your plan, it's most important to hear your thoughts and particularly when we're talking about public private partnerships and that, particularly Gaffney Place was a great example of that. And I think there's much more opportunity to do that model on a statewide basis. And I think communities are eager to step up and to participate as well as corporate partners. So that you know, I think is a classic example. And the truth is, yep, visually it's an unbelievable compared to -- you know the before and after on those photos are remarkable.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): And looks good. So I look forward to working with you, and particularly on those issues. Thank you.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Hartley. Any further comments or questions? Yes, Senator Formica, the Chair recognizes you.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, sir, good morning. Good morning.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Good morning.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Nice to see you again. I have just two quick comments mostly for your consideration moving forward. One is, talked about southeastern Connecticut and some of the housing issues on the negative side. On the positive side we have some issues that have to do with job creation that's exploding in southeastern Connecticut with regard to the new manufacturing positions open at Electric Boat. We're trying to keep and encourage all the engineering students from Yukon to come in and relocate in our area, but we need a focus on housing there. We need to focus to make sure, and I'm hopeful that will be on your radar moving forward, that you make southeastern Connecticut and those areas an opportunity zone to keep our young people and people looking not only to get into these entry-level jobs, but as the 15,000 people, the majority of those folks at Electric Boat retire over the next ten years, we're going to have to have substitute housing, so keep that in mind.

And something that I mentioned when you came before the Appropriations Subcommittee the other day with regard to the incentive housing zone, as first selectman I took advantage in East Lyme of the extended housing zone which basically allowed towns to choose where they wanted to put housing that was affordable or workforce developed instead of being mandated, such as 830G seems to do. And we created a number of opportunities for incentive zones, mostly in and around our downtown mixing with commercial to drive traffic to our commercial

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

industry. And it was supposed to be as the word implies, incentivized opportunity and there was to be small payments made for zoning approval of those and an additional for actual as built. And of course the opportunity exists but the funding did not. So consequently the program stalled. So I'd like you to look into that and whether funding is the way to go or perhaps tax credits or some other - - some other opportunity to encourage that because I think that really helps balance the need for housing and affordable housing and good planning for local communities. So I thank you for you know, your hard work in the past. You come highly recommended. I wish you success, but I hope you consider those items moving forward.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you, yes.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Senator Formica. Yes, Representative Yaccarino, you have the floor.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Ms. Bruno and congratulations. A couple of questions. I do like the incentive zone much more than the strict affordable housing because sometimes it just doesn't seem to work out enough, it's on 10 percent of the population usually, but that's another subject. But in New Haven -- I live in north New Haven in New Haven Colony and I'm sure Hartford -- Hartford and throughout Bridgeport area there are many homeless people still unfortunately. On the Connecticut Coalition of Homeless -- for Homelessness. I see you around the board and I work with them sometimes. But I -- how do you feel about transitional housing? Rapid rehousing where people

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

that are -- they can't really afford an affordable house but they go into a -- one complex basically but it leads to jobs and you know, workforce development. It's a tough subject and you're going to be the Commissioner and I think we have to do a little more personally and I want to get your take, please?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: A little more --

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): A lot more.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: A lot more on transitional housing and rapid rehousing?

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yeah.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So we -- I was a developer -- when I was a developer we did supportive housing as part of the regular affordable housing, which is similar to it. And it works pretty well. We had experience for about eight years when we did the first developments and there were six units set aside for women that were domestic violence or other issues.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: And they were very stable. Because the services were attached to that so they do have to have that support. When I came here, and I was talking about my education and how I moved forward, I had a lot of people that supported me. It wasn't in supportive housing --

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): And very impressive, by the way.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you. It was just people that were around me, they encouraged me.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: So these other population needs that support of some people to come and help them out. And it has been successful. We have -- we're going to continue that. I don't know the whole process of the rapid rehousing because we -- I was on the other side.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Right.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Of this section, but my staff actually is going to brief me on Friday. We're going to go through the whole programs and see what is working and what is not working and how we can improve, if we need to improve.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): You made a point, because if you have support you're going to have either a warm house you know, a meal. You have somewhere to go and unfortunately there people, either mental health problems or other issues or depression, which is mental.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Yeah.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): They fall through the cracks and as a society sometimes we need to be there and we should be there. But it's -- many times it comes down to dollars but I would argue if you had -- if we had a real program in the long run we'd save money because I think people would hopefully get stability and get back to -- even if it's a part-time job, it's something and then move on with their life. It's never going to be a perfect society, I get that. But I think -- and I'm supposed to meet with Paul Mounds from the Governor's office about this. We -- I think we can -- if we had a real program I think we'll have to put some money into or

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

-- and volunteerism but I think we could do something and I -- hopefully we can maybe work on something but like Light Haven and New Haven, Columbus House, all these places, Harkness House and -- they do a lot with little, so.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I would love to have your suggestions and I will look forward to meeting with you.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): All right. Well, thank you. I wish you the best.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): We can talk after. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Yaccarino. Representative Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (11TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. GODFREY (11TH): I'm enjoying your dedication and certainly your enthusiasm, and let me tell you when Senator Hartley so warmly endorses you, that carries a lot of weight with me. I'm from Danbury and I represent the downtown urban -- the urban part of Danbury, not the more suburban looking parts of the city. It's a pretty big city geographically. And I certainly share a number of the comments that were made regarding homelessness. We have about a 10 percent home -- 10 percent poverty rate in Danbury and that's a consideration, one where we're developing policy and funding programs. But being from this part of Danbury, the biggest problem continues to be the unaffordability of housing for

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

the ALICE families, Access Limited, Income Constrained Employed. Certainly the report that the United Way did, that they published I believe it was last summer, which I've read and consult frequently, is an eye-opening and alarming report on working families in Connecticut. And the United Way is hardly a partisan think tank. They're a federal organization dealing with social issues and do a fantastic job. And certainly some of their discussions about housing, the business community that I'm aware of certainly, Danbury shares because there's just not enough housing that their employees can afford.

And to me this isn't just data. This isn't just numbers. When I do door-to-door and I'm going up to what I note is a two-family house and I'm looking at the two doorbells and each one of them has four separate last names under it, I know what's going on and that people are struggling. They're struggling with a lot of the other household expenses too, not just housing but housing is usually of course the biggest expense that any family, whether its defined genealogically or just by you know four people struggling and living together. So I'm hoping that your department will continue to do a job accounting for these kinds of families. It's -- it's so disheartening when I'm out there realizing what a struggle they're having just to keep the roof over their head quite -- quite literally.

And there is the problem with exclusionary zoning. I understand some gentrification is good but too often in my opinion it prices housing of affordability. And it -- I think this is actually the biggest huge problem that the State of Connecticut is facing. People leave, not because

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

taxes are too high, not because you know, the roads are bad. They are. But simply because they can't afford to live here. Even the cities. I'm not really -- I understand the suburban slice is much different from the cities and the cities need a huge boost that it kind of ignored and relegated to second-class status for I think too long. And Danbury is more successful than a lot of others, I have to -- I have to admit. But I'm hoping you know, you'll certainly -- if you haven't seen -- read the United Way report, please do so.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I -- I have, I have.

REP. GODFREY (11TH): I'm sure you have. I guessed you would 'cause you seem to be that kind of person. You're interested in this kind of stuff. And -- and continue to do whatever is in your power. If you need more power, I'd be happy to help you get it. I know you're going to need more money. I'm happy to help you with that too, because it's -- it's -- it's such a big -- such a big issue. And you know, we talk about recruiting businesses, bringing them into Connecticut. They're not going to come here if their employees can't afford to live here. It's bad when I'm watching people in Danbury commuting down to Stanford because they can't afford to live in Stanford. I'm looking at people in New Milford commuting to Danbury because they can't afford Danbury. And you know, I wish people could actually live closer to their place of work. That would cut down a lot of you know, greenhouse gases and all that stuff too though. So all of these things are connected. So I'm certainly happy to hear any comments you -- you may have on this because it -- you have such a critical position.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: And I have that experience. I've worked in the cities, in New Haven and in Waterbury and I know exactly what you're saying. I mean I was there when I was in my beginnings. Didn't have enough money to pay for an apartment. I live with my brothers. So I do know exactly, and it's something that I really wanted to do, is when I say expeditious, I really want to make sure that we are going to be expeditious because every moment that we do not process an application and we do not help to make those projects faster, is somebody suffering. So I do know exactly what you're saying and I would love to have some of your suggestions, and I will look forward for your support.

REP. GODFREY (11TH): Thank you so much.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. GODFREY (11TH): I've been fortunate. I have most of the senior housing projects in Danbury in my district and in the last few years there has been a lot of investment by the state government in upgrading them. Some of them were actually built going back to the Great Society back in the 1960s and it was overdue, to put in new cabinets and new appliances and fix the roofs and the windows were leaking, that kind of thing. So I'm hoping we also continue to upgrade and support our existing public housing as well as working on the whole affordability issue that is such a pressing need. Thank you so much.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Godfrey. We have a champion here for the -- for the Housing Department and -- which drives the point

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

home of the importance of keeping the lines of communication open between our executive branch and our legislative branch of government and I know you'll have an open door policy. If that's it for questions and comments, unless -- Representative Phipps, my Vice-Chair has the floor.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Once again, congratulations on your appointment. I was going to ask questions about the relationship between housing and other needed services, specifically around education but I think several other colleagues have already answered that. So I'll just say I'm looking forward to working with you and your resume is impeccable. Your reputation definitely proceeds you and I'm just really looking forward to working with you.

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you, Representative Phipps. And you know, I was just remembering you know, many of the advocates in my town, Hartford, have been fighting for more homeownership and in the past administration the Housing Department was interested in rental units and you know, we had a whole you know tug of war on that issue because, although that may be true, some other communities may need more rental communities in Hartford, one of our problems is very low homeownership. And I'm hoping that -- that we keep those lines of communication open. I know your background. I had the opportunity to meet with you before this hearing. I believe you'll do a great job and I think the Governor; Governor Lamont has chosen you very well in picking you as his -- and I also remember the transition thing. The housing transition team for the Governor had recommended

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

more private partners -- private public partnerships to develop more housing. Do you have any thoughts on that before we close the hearing?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: I'm looking forward to it. It's what I have done in the past 15 years, bringing people together from the private sector, the public sector. Nationally I have some relationships with NeighborWorks America and also the Federal Home in Boston Fund so I'm looking forward to try to reach out to everybody I can.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Very good. Congratulations again on behalf of all the Committee members. I think from the comments I've heard today, I believe you have the -- the support of our Committee going forward to the Florida House of Representative. But before we let you go we have one question we ask of all our nominees. Is there anything in your past that you believe would prove embarrassing to this Committee, to the Governor or to the State of Connecticut?

SEILA MOSQUERA-BRUNO: No.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well thank you very much, and that concludes our public hearing. And we will immediately adjourn the public -- well before we -- we adjourn the public hearing we always allow the people from the public to make any comments, either for or against. I believe we have a couple of people that have signed up. Let's just take a quick look here. Yes, we do. First of all we have Tom Sullivan, who has signed up to speak regarding the nomination of Andrew Mais for Insurance Commissioner. Is Tom Sullivan with us? Please come forward. Mr. Sullivan, before you take a seat would

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

you please raise your right hand? Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

TOM SULLIVAN: I do.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please take a seat. The floor is yours, Mr. Sullivan.

TOM SULLIVAN: Thank you. My name is Thomas Sullivan from West Hartford, Connecticut and I'm here in my private capacity as a citizen of the state. Although I currently hold a position with the Federal Government, I lead the Insurance Supervisory and Regulatory section of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. It was 12 years ago around this time that Governor Rell had appointed me to be Insurance Commissioner, the 30th Insurance Commissioner of the state and that was before this very Committee. I went to have the distinct honor to work shoulder to shoulder with some of the finest regulators on the planet in the Connecticut Department of Insurance. I devoted four years of my professional life to public service, a state level and now I'm back in public service on a federal level, at a time of historic turmoil for the financial markets for our states and some of the regulated entities in our state. So it was both a challenging and probably the most rewarding part of my professional career to serve the state.

I share these experiences with you because I'm confident I can speak with some authority and some reverence to the importance of the position of Insurance Commissioner and it is for that reason I'm here to support Andrew Mais as Insurance Commissioner. I was first introduced to Mr. Mais by a former colleague, New York's past Insurance Superintendent and I'll call him Commissioner, in

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

New York they call him Superintendent Howard Mills. I consider Howard to be a good friend and colleague. When Howard endorses someone it means something to me. Mr. Mais went on to work closely with former Superintendent Mills during their time together as consultants at Deloitte.

I've come to know Mr. Mais over the years as we've run in the same circles, most notably to this day at the National Association of Insurance Commissioners meetings, various industry and regulatory trade forums and other events. More over there was a time I was a regulatory consultant myself. I worked at a competitor of Mr. Mais', one of the other big four firms and I've directly competed with him in that space.

During my years of acquaintance with Mr. Mais I've always known him to be easily approachable, affable and genuine. He is known in the precincts that I continue to run to be a man of integrity and honor. I've seen some of Mr. Mais' subject matter work. I consider him to be conversant on the macro issues of the day, which are currently confronting the insurance regulators, both locally and globally.

It is for these reasons that I've come before you in support of the nomination of Mr. Mais as the next Insurance Commissioner of the State of Connecticut. I believe he will discharge his statutory duties and obligations while serving the citizens of our state with honor and distinction. I offer -- I have offered my personal continued counsel to be a resource to Mr. Mais as he transitions back into public service in this crucial role within our state's government. So thank you for allowing me to offer support on behalf of Mr. Mais, and it's great

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

to be back in the building. I told a few of the lobbyist outside that I haven't been here since the day I walked out, which was 12 years ago, and maybe I won't come back again for another 12 years, I don't know. (Laughing)

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Well Mr. Sullivan, I want to thank you for your past service to the State of Connecticut and also I want to thank you for taking time from your schedule to come and support the nomination of Mr. Mais. So from the discussion from my Senate colleagues, his is a Senate Resolution, I feel pretty confident that he has the support of our colleagues in the Senate so -- but thank you, and I'm also very appreciative of the fact that -- of your willingness to be of assistance to him in his transition. Are there any questions or comments from any fellow Committee members? If not, well thank you very much. And that brings us to the last public speaker, Ms. Sonja Larkin -Thorne who is here to speak also on behalf of the nomination of Andrew. Before you're seated could you please raise your right hand? Do you promise to tell us the truth and nothing but the truth?

SONJA LARKIN-THORNE: Yes, I do.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Please be seated, and the floor is yours.

SONJA LARKIN-THORNE: Thank you, Chairman Vargas and distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Non -- Nominating Committee. My name is Sonja Larkin-Thorne. I'm a resident of Avon, Connecticut, a Consumer Advocate and retired Vice-President of Government Affairs for the Hartford Insurance Group. I appreciate the opportunity to come in support of the nomination of Andrew Mais to

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

be Commissioner of the -- of the Department of Insurance for the State of Connecticut. Andrew understands the business of insurance. He understands that it's both global and local. His experience in New York, one of the largest and most complex insurance markets in the world provides him with a solid understanding of the growing complexity of the business of insurance and its impact on both consumers and business. Yet, he still has made time in his individual personal life to engage in community activities and share his knowledge and expertise with everyday folk and consumers.

I first met Andrew and worked with him during my eight years as a member of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners Consumer Board of Trustees and appointed consumer representative and also an ins -- an international insurance consumer representative with the International Association of Insurance Supervisors. We worked together on global and domestic issues. I had in the minds of many my insurance colleagues and friends, moved to the dark side, consumer advocacy. (Laughing) It's true. But Andrew reached out to me to discuss insurance issues, use of big data and complex property and refileing, consumer privacy and protection issues. How international insurance standards and regulations might impact insurance companies and the need to ensure accuracy of all information used by insurers impacting consumers.

Andrew understands the challenges faced by the insurance departments and insurers, the need to stay abreast and encourage innovation while ensuring consumer protection and company solvency. He's an activist who knows how to advocate and balance the critical issues in a changing and complex insurance

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

marketplace. He is not just smart but ethical, a hard worker, honest, persistent and balanced in his approach as a problem solver. He will bring these skills and more to Connecticut ensuring that the Department of Insurance continues to be viewed as a leader in insurance throughout the country. I have worked with Insurance Commissioners and Supervisors throughout the country from Hawaii to Alaska, Mississippi and California and in most of the 50 states including Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia and of course, Connecticut. This opportunity has allowed me to develop a clear picture of what type of leadership it takes to run a Department of Insurance and I believe Andrew Mais brings that skillset to the State of Connecticut and should be confirmed as our next Insurance Commissioner. Thank you.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you very much for your testimony, Ms. Larkin-Thorne, for taking time out of your schedule to come in and support the nomination of Commissioner Andrew Mais. Any comments or questions from the Committee members? If not, thank you very much for coming and supporting. This is very impressive that two people with the backgrounds you and the previous Commissioner Sullivan, to take time and support him shows the kind of support, that support he has in the community, which is wonderful. And that concludes our public hearing.

Without further ado we'll adjourn the public hearing and enter into our business portion if -- since we have a Senator with us in our first -- well actually we have two Senators with us. And our first Resolution is a Senate Resolution so. Public hearing is adjourned.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

(Gavel)

Meeting is called to order. First order of business is Senate Resolution supporting the nomination of Mr. -- Commissioner Mais to Insurance Commissioner in the State of Connecticut. Is there a motion to that affect? It's been moved by Senator Hartley and seconded by Senator Formica. Will the Clerk please take the roll?

CLERK:

Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH): Yeah.

CLERK: Looney, Fasano, Bergstein, Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Yes.

CLERK: Hartley.

SENATOR HARTLEY (15TH): Yes.

CLERK: Kushner, Moore, Witkos.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Thank you. That brings us to the second nominee, which is Resolution confirming the appointment of Seila Mosquera-Bruno of Milford to be Commissioner of Housing. Is there a motion to that affect? All right. It's been properly moved by my Vice-Chair and seconded by ranking member so we have Perillo, so we have the motion properly enforced. Will the -- will the Clerk please take the roll?

CLERK: Vargus.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes.

CLERK: Phipps.

REP. PHIPPS (100TH): Yes.

NOMINATION CONFIRMATION HEARING

CLERK: Perillo.

REP. PERILLO (113TH): Yes.

CLERK: D'Agastino, Davis.

REP. DAVIS (57TH): Yes.

CLERK: DiMassa, Godfrey.

REP. GODFREY (11TH): Yes.

CLERK: Verrengia, Yaccarino.

REP. YACCARINO (87TH): Yes.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Madam Clerk do we have an announcement for -- for our next meeting?

CLERK: That will come via email as we don't have --

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Via email. Yes, Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. You may have announced this previously but votes will be held open?

REP. VARGAS (6TH): Yes, that's correct. I did announce it but I'll re -- reiterate it. The votes will be held open 'till 4:00 p.m. Thank you, Senator Formica.

SENATOR FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. VARGAS (6TH): And with that it concludes the business of this Committee and we hereby are recessed until 4:00 p.m.

(Gavel)